

LESSON 9: COMPANY FORMATIONS AND MOVEMENT



arc
base
double time
guide
mark time
mass formation
post (2 different meanings)

PURPOSE

This lesson covers company drill formations and movements “without arms.” Your knowledge and recall of squad and platoon drill from previous lessons will be vitally important in understanding this information. Pay special attention to the differences between platoon and company drill and to the roles of key personnel in company drill.

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, you will build upon your knowledge of individual drill movements, squad drills and platoon drills in order to conduct company drill.

Company drill provides the procedures for executing platoon drill in conjunction with other platoons in the same formation. For drill purposes, a company consists of a company headquarters and two or more platoons.

DRILL TIPS

- The company has four prescribed formations: company in line with platoons in line, company in column with platoons in column, company in column with platoons in line (used primarily for ceremonies), and a company mass formation. However, the company may form into a column of twos in the same manner as the platoon. (Graphics of these formations are with their corresponding text.)
- The company normally forms in a line formation; however, it may re-form in column when all personnel can identify their exact position in the formation.
- The company forms basically the same as the platoon. On the command “*fall-in*,” platoons form in line, centered on and facing the person forming the unit, with five-step intervals between platoons.
- When in a line or a **mass formation**, the right platoon serves as the **base**; when in a column formation, the lead platoon serves as the base.
- The first sergeant assumes the position of the company commander if there are no officers present.
- Members of a company break ranks in the same manner as in platoon drill except that the individuals called from the formation form on the company commander rather than on the platoon leader.
- The company marches, rests, and executes eyes right in the same manner as the platoon.

DRILL TIPS (CONTINUED)

- When the company commander directs that the company “*open or close ranks*,” “*extend march*,” “*close on the leading platoon*,” or “*prepare for inspection*,” platoons execute the movements on the command of the platoon leaders and not on the directives of the company commander. The platoon leaders command the movement in sequence beginning with the base platoon.

FORMING THE COMPANY

When possible, platoons assemble near the formation site before forming. When the noncommissioned officers form the company, platoon leaders normally observe the procedure from a position to the rear of their platoons.

The first sergeant takes a **post** nine steps in front of, centered on, and facing the line where the front rank of each platoon is to form. The first sergeant then commands “*fall in*.”

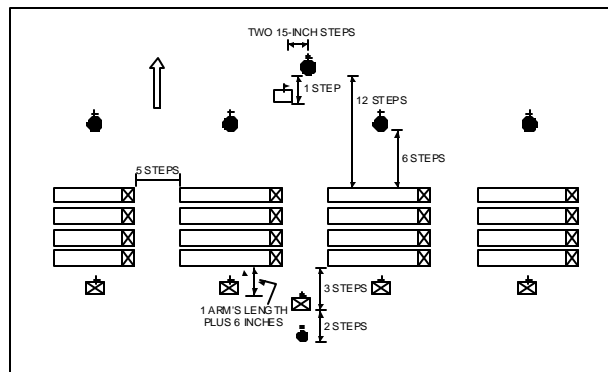
On that command, the platoons form in the same manner prescribed in platoon drill. Each platoon sergeant faces the platoon while the platoons are forming and directs the platoon to adjust (if necessary) and align on the platoon to its right at the correct interval. Once formed, the platoon sergeants face about. (**Note:** If the first sergeant commands “*at close interval, fall in*,” the members of the platoon form at close interval; however, they maintain the five-step interval between platoons.)

When all of the platoon sergeants are facing to the front, the first sergeant directs (if appropriate) “*receive the report*.” The platoon sergeants face about and command “*report*.” The squad leaders report as previously described in platoon drill.

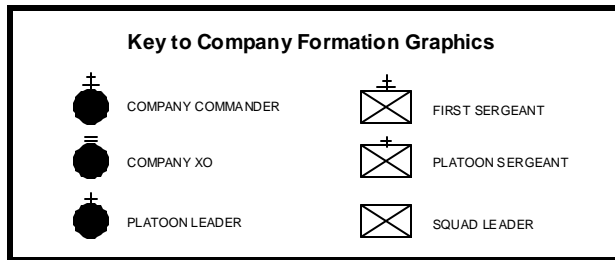
Having received the report, the platoon sergeants face about. When all platoon sergeants are facing to the front, the first sergeant commands “*report*.” The platoon sergeants salute and report in succession from right to left. The first sergeant returns each salute individually. Having received the report from the platoon sergeants, the first sergeant faces about and awaits the arrival of the company commander.

If the company commander does not receive the company, the first sergeant commands “*post*.” On this command, the platoon sergeants and guidon bearer step forward three steps. Simultaneously, the first sergeant faces about, steps forward three steps, and occupies the position of the commander.

If the company commander receives the company from the first sergeant, after the company commander halts at the post, the first sergeant salutes and reports, “*sir, all present*,” or “*sir, all accounted for*,” or “*sir, (so many) absent*.” The company commander returns the salute and commands “*post*.” The first sergeant faces about and marches to the post three steps to the rear and at the center of the company, halts, and faces about. The guidon bearer steps forward three steps.



Company in Line with Platoons in Line



The platoon sergeants face to the right in marching and assume their posts to the rear of their platoons (if the platoon leader is not present, they step forward three steps). The platoon leaders march around the left flank of their platoons and assume their posts by inclining and halting, already facing to the front. The company executive officer assumes a post two steps to the rear of the first sergeant.

When the company commander forms the company, the procedures are the same as above except that the platoon leaders form their platoons and the first sergeant, platoon sergeants, and guidon bearer fall in at their posts. The command “*post*” is not necessary.

CHANGING INTERVAL

The company changes interval in the same manner as prescribed for the platoon. When the company commander wants the company to obtain close interval in a line formation while maintaining a five-step interval, the company commander directs “*close on the base platoon at close interval.*” The platoon leaders face about and command “*count, off.*” After the platoons have counted off, the platoon leaders command “*close interval, march.*” The second, third, and fourth platoon leaders command “*right, face*” and in succession command “*half step, march.*” They halt at the five-step interval and face the platoon to the left.

If the company commander gives “*close on the third platoon at close interval,*” the

platoon leaders on the right of the designated platoon have their platoons obtain close interval, face their platoons to the left, march (at the half step) forward until they obtain the five-step interval, halt, and face their platoons to the right.

When the company commander wants the company to obtain normal interval from close interval in a line formation while maintaining a five-step interval, the company commander directs “*extend on the base platoon at normal interval.*” The platoon leaders face about and march (at the half step) their platoons to a position that ensures the five-step interval between platoons after they have obtained normal interval.

After halting and facing the platoons to the left, the platoon leaders command “*count, off.*” The platoon leaders then command “*normal interval, march.*” If necessary, the platoon leader verifies the interval as described in *Opening and Closing Ranks*.

ALIGNING THE COMPANY

To align the company in a line formation, the company commander directs “*have your platoons dress right.*” On the directive, all platoon leaders face about. The right flank platoon leader commands “*dress right, dress*” and aligns the platoon as described in platoon drill.

After the right flank platoon leader has verified the alignment of the first rank, the platoon leader to the left commands “*dress right, dress.*” That left platoon leader then faces to the half right in marching, moves to a position on line with and one step to the left of the left flank cadet of the first rank, and faces left down the line. After aligning the first rank, that platoon leader

centers himself or herself on the first rank, faces to the right in marching, takes two short steps, halts, executes left face, and aligns the second rank.

The platoon leader aligns the last two ranks in the same manner as the second. After aligning the last rank, the platoon leader faces to the left in marching, returns to a position at the center of the platoon, halts perpendicular to the formation, faces to the right, commands “*ready, front,*” and faces about. All platoon leaders to the left of the second platoon take the same actions as the second platoon leader.

To align the company in column, the company commander directs “*have your platoons cover.*” On this directive, the first platoon leader faces about and commands “*cover.*” The other platoon leaders command “*stand fast.*” The first platoon covers as in platoon drill. The other platoons then execute the movement in succession as soon as the platoon to their front has completed the movement.

OPENING AND CLOSING RANKS

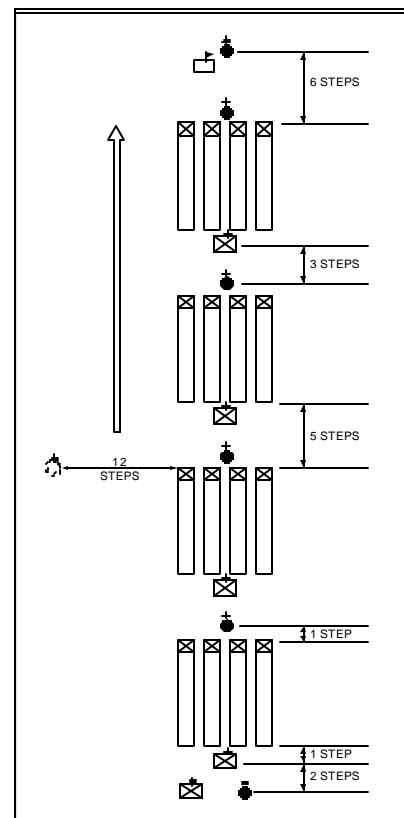
To open ranks, the company commander directs “*have your platoons open ranks and dress right.*” On the directive, all platoon leaders face about. The right flank platoon leader commands “*open ranks, march.*” When the platoon has completed the movement, the right flank platoon leader then commands “*dress right, dress*” and aligns the platoon the same as in platoon drill. After the right flank platoon leader aligns the first rank, the platoon leader to the left commands “*open ranks, march*” and “*dress right, dress.*” All platoon leaders to the left of the second platoon take the same actions as the second platoon leader.

To close ranks, the commander directs “*have your platoons close ranks.*” On the

directive, all platoon leaders face about and in sequence from right to left command “*close ranks, march.*” The platoons execute the movement the same as in platoon drill. After the platoons have completed the movement, the platoon leaders face about.

CHANGING THE DIRECTION OF MARCH OF A COLUMN

The company changes the direction of march basically the same as the squad and platoon. The commands are “*column right (left), march*” or “*column half right (half left), march.*” The base element during a column movement is the lead platoon and the squad on the flank, in the direction of the turn.



Company in Column with Platoons in Column

When at the halt, the lead platoon leader repeats the company commander's

preparatory command. Succeeding platoon leaders give the supplementary command *“forward.”* On the command of execution *“march,”* the lead platoon executes the movement as described in platoon drill; succeeding platoons execute the movement on their platoon leader’s command at approximately the same location.

While marching, units execute the movement as described from the halt except that the succeeding platoon leaders give the supplementary command *“continue to march”* rather than *“forward.”*

The company executes rear march and inclines in the same manner as the platoon.

When executing counter column march from the halt, the lead platoon leader repeats the preparatory command. Succeeding platoon leaders give the supplementary command *“forward.”* On the command of execution *“march,”* the lead platoon executes the movement as described in platoon drill, and marches through the other platoons. Succeeding platoons execute the movement on the platoon leader’s command at approximately the same location.

When units execute the movement while marching, the leader gives the command of execution as the left foot strikes the marching surface. Platoons execute the movement basically the same as from the halt except that the succeeding platoon leaders give the supplementary command *“continue to march”* rather than *“forward.”* The guidon bearer faces to the left in marching from the halt or executes a column left in marching, marches by the most direct route outside of the formation, and moves to a position in front of the lead platoon as it clears the rear of the company.

CORRECTING DISTANCE BETWEEN PLATOONS

To obtain correct distance when the company is marching in column or is in a column at the halt, the company commander directs *“close on leading platoon.”*

When at the halt and on the directive *“close on leading platoon,”* the platoon leader of the lead platoon commands (over the right shoulder) *“stand fast.”* The succeeding platoon leaders command (over the right shoulder) *“forward, march,” “mark time, march,”* and *“platoon, halt”* when they obtain correct distance.

While marching and on the directive *“close on leading platoon,”* the platoon leader of the lead platoon commands (over the right shoulder) *“half step, march.”* The succeeding platoon leaders command (over the right shoulder) *“continue to march”* and *“half step, march”* as soon as they obtain the correct distance. The company commander commands *“forward, march (halt)”* as soon as all platoons have obtained the correct distance and are marching at the half step.

FORMING A COLUMN OF TWOS AND RE-FORMING

The company forms a column of twos basically the same as the platoon. The company commander must allow sufficient time for the platoon leaders and the squad leaders of the lead platoon to give supplementary commands before giving the command of execution.

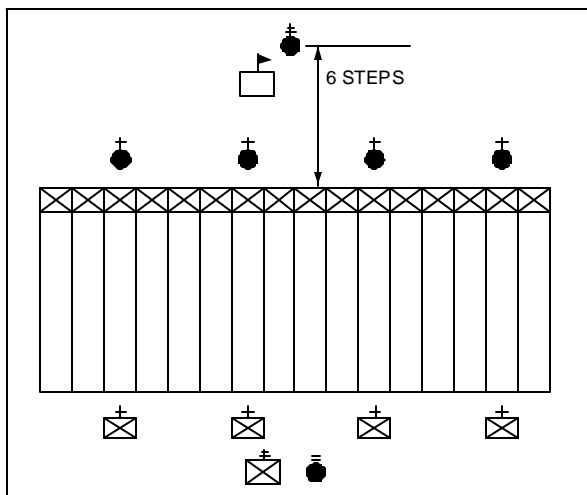
The command for this movement is *“column of twos from the right (left), march.”* The lead platoon leader repeats the preparatory command. Other platoon leaders give the supplementary command *“stand fast.”* On the company commander’s

command of execution “*march*,” the lead platoon executes the movement as in platoon drill. Other platoons execute the movement on their leader’s command. Succeeding platoon leaders give their commands in order to follow with the prescribed five-step distance between platoons.

Re-forming into a column of fours is executed only at the halt. The command for this movement is “*column of fours to the left (right), march*.” On the company commander’s command of execution, all platoons execute the movement simultaneously as described in platoon drill. As soon as the platoons are re-formed, the platoon leaders march the platoons forward and obtain the five-step distance between platoons.

FORMING A COMPANY MASS

The company may form in mass from a company in column (platoons in column) when halted or while marching. The company must be at close interval (“*close interval, march*”) before the commander can give “*company mass left, march*.”



Company in a Mass Formation

On the preparatory command “*company mass left*,” given at the halt, the lead platoon

leader commands “*stand fast*.” The platoon leaders of the succeeding platoons command “*column half left*.” On the command of execution “*march*,” the lead platoon stands fast. The other platoons execute the column half left and then execute a column half right on the command of the platoon leaders to a point (line) that ensures the platoons will be at close interval alongside the platoon to their right when halted.

As the platoons come abreast of the base platoon, the platoon leaders command “*mark time, march*.” While the platoon marks time, the members adjust their positions to ensure alignment on the cadet to their right. The platoon leaders allow their platoons to mark time for about eight counts and then command “*platoon, halt*.” On the command of execution “*march*,” the company commander and guidon bearer face to the right (left) in marching and reposition themselves centered on the company.

ALIGNING A COMPANY MASS

As soon as the company commander forms the company in mass, he or she gives the command “*at close interval, dress right, dress*.”

On the command of execution “*dress*,” (1) the platoon leader of the right platoon marches by the most direct route to the right flank and verifies the alignment of as many ranks as necessary to ensure proper alignment in the same manner as aligning the platoon; when finished, the right platoon leader returns to a position one step in front of and centered on the third squad, halts and faces to the right; and (2) the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants position themselves in line with the third squad of their platoon by executing one 15-inch step to the right.

When the right platoon leader has returned to that position, the company commander commands “*ready, front.*”

CHANGING THE DIRECTION OF MARCH OF A MASS FORMATION

The company changes the direction of march in mass basically the same as a platoon column movement. When executed from the halt, the commander faces in the desired direction of march, looks toward the formation, and commands “*right (left) turn, march.*”

On the command of execution “*march,*” the platoon leaders face to the half right (left) in marching and continue to march in an **arc** until parallel to the new direction of march. Then they begin marching with the half step, dressing on the right (left) flank platoon leader until the leader commands “*forward, march.*” The right (left) **guide** (the base squad leader in the direction of turn) faces to the right (left) in marching and immediately takes up the half step.

All other squad leaders (front rank) face to the half right (left) in marching and continue to march in an arc until they come on line with the guide. At this time, they begin marching with the half step and dress (glancing out of the corner of the eye) in the direction of the turn until the leader commands “*forward, march.*” On that command, the dress is automatically to the right. All other members march forward and execute the movement in the same manner as their squad leaders.

When executed while marching, the movement is in the same manner as from the halt except that the company commander faces about (marching backward) to give the command “*right (left) turn, march.*” The commander then faces about and completes the turning movement. After the company has completed the turn, the company commander

faces about, commands “*forward, march,*” and again faces about.

FORMING A COLUMN FROM A COMPANY MASS

To form a company in column from a company mass at the halt, the command is “*column of platoons, right platoon, column right (column half right), march.*” The right platoon leader gives the supplementary command of “*forward (column right or column half right),*” and the other platoon leaders command “*stand fast.*” On the command of execution “*march,*” the right platoon marches in the direction indicated. All other platoons follow (in sequence) in column, executing column half right and column half left on the commands of the platoon leaders.

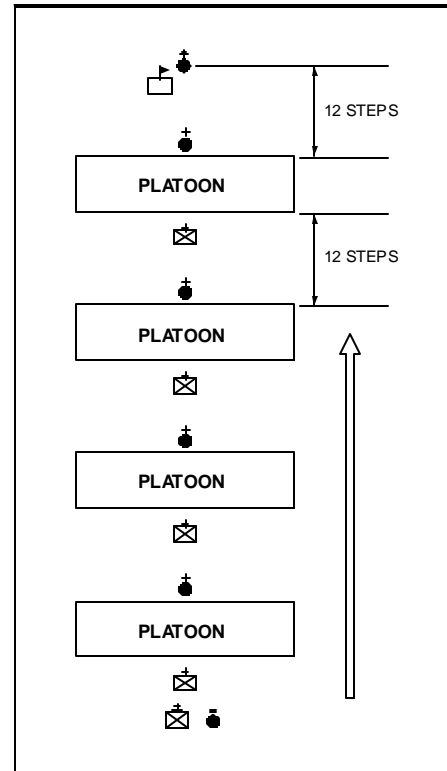
To execute the movement when marching, the company commander commands “*column of platoons, right platoon, double time, march.*” On the preparatory command, the right platoon leader gives the supplementary command “*double time,*” and the other platoon leaders give the supplementary command “*continue to march.*” On the command of execution “*march,*” the right platoon marches in double time. Other platoon leaders (in sequence) command “*column half right, double time, march*” and “*column half left, march*” to bring the succeeding platoons in columns with the lead platoon.

The platoon leader and the platoon sergeant reposition themselves after the supplementary command, but before the command of execution.

FORMING A COMPANY IN COLUMN WITH PLATOONS IN LINE AND RE-FORMING

To form a company in column with platoons in line from a column formation at the halt, the command is “*column of platoons in line, march.*” The platoon leader of the lead platoon commands “*column right.*” All other platoon leaders command “*forward.*” On the command of execution “*march,*” the lead platoon stands fast, and the second platoon executes a column right, marches 12 steps past the right file of the first platoon, and executes a column left. As they come in line with the base platoon, the platoon leader commands “*mark time, march.*” After the platoon has marched in place for eight counts, the platoon leader commands “*platoon, halt.*”

The succeeding platoons execute a column right at approximately the same location as the platoon to their front, execute a column left and then halt in the same manner as the second platoon. When the platoons have halted in position, the company commander commands “*left, face.*” On that command, the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants face in marching and assume their posts.



Company in Column with Platoons in Line

When executed while marching, the movements are basically the same as from the halt except that the commander gives the command of execution as the right foot strikes the marching surface. The lead platoon leader commands “*mark time.*” On the preparatory command, the second platoon leader commands “*column right,*” and the succeeding platoon leaders command “*continue to march.*”

On the command of execution “*march,*” the lead platoon executes mark time and marches in place (approximately eight counts) until the platoon leader commands “*platoon, halt.*” The other platoons execute the movement in the same manner as from the halt.

To re-form in column with platoons in column, the company commander commands “*right, face; column of platoons,*

left platoon, march.” On the command *‘right, face,’* the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants face in marching and resume their posts in column. On the preparatory command *“column of platoons, left platoon,”* the left platoon leader commands *“forward, (column left [half left]).”* All other platoon leaders command *“column half left.”*

On the command of execution *“march,”* the left platoon executes the movement. The other platoon leaders give the appropriate commands for following the lead platoon at the correct distance. If necessary, the platoons following the second platoon automatically adjust the length of their step to ensure correct distance from the platoon to their front.

DISMISSING THE COMPANY

Dismiss the company only at attention. Either the first sergeant or the company commander may dismiss the company.

When the first sergeant dismisses the company, the company commander commands *“first sergeant.”* The first sergeant marches by the most direct route to a position three steps from and directly in front of the company commander. After the first sergeant halts, the company commander commands *“take charge of the company”* and they exchange salutes.

Upon termination of the salutes, the platoon leaders and executive officer leave the formation. The platoon sergeants face to the right in marching and take their posts (platoon leader’s position) six steps in front of and centered on the platoon by marching around the right flank of the platoon, inclining, and halting already facing to the front. The first sergeant steps forward three steps and faces about.

When all platoon sergeants are at their posts, the first sergeant commands *“take charge of your platoons.”* The platoon sergeants salute. The first sergeant returns all salutes with one salute. After they exchange salutes, the first sergeant and guidon bearer leave the formation.

The platoon sergeants then dismiss their platoons as in platoon drill.

When the company commander dismisses the company, he or she commands *“take charge of your platoons.”* The platoon leaders salute. The company commander returns all salutes with one salute. After they exchange salutes, the company commander, guidon bearer, first sergeant, and executive officer leave the formation. Each platoon leader faces about and commands *“platoon sergeant.”*

The platoon sergeants face to the right in marching, incline around the squad leader(s), halt three steps in front of and centered on the platoon leader, and face to the right. Each platoon leader then directs *“take charge of the platoon.”* They exchange salutes and the platoon leaders leave the formation. The platoon sergeants step forward three steps, face about, and dismiss the platoons as in platoon drill.

CONCLUSION

Company drill is yet another link in the chain of drill movements of *Leadership Lab*. A weak link can break a chain, so make certain that you have reviewed this information well. It is important that you are familiar with all of the positions and formations of company drill before you can move up to the next links in the chain — leadership responsibilities at the company and battalion level and battalion drill.

“The fundamentals of drill are established daily . . . If these maneuvers are all accurately observed and practiced every day, the army will remain virtually undefeatable and always awe inspiring . . .” Frederick the Great, 1789

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